

IS THE UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND ON TRACK?

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The February 2007 decision to launch a new Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa (AFRICOM) has met with controversy both in the United States and abroad. AFRICOM's proponents claim that the new command accurately reflects Africa's growing strategic importance and an enlightened U.S. foreign policy focused on supporting "African solutions to African problems." Its critics allege that the command demonstrates a self-serving American policy focused on fighting terrorism, securing Africa's burgeoning energy stocks, and countering Chinese influence.

To overcome such misgivings AFRICOM must demonstrate a commitment to programs mutually beneficial to both African and American national interests. In his speeches, General Ward has repeatedly asserted that AFRICOM intends to be a learning organization. The question is, has the command and its staff used the opportunity following its formation to date, to prove its ability to assist the continent to meet its security challenges?

IS THE UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND ON TRACK?

President George W. Bush formally announced the creation of a new Unified Combatant Command (COCOM) for the African continent on February 6, 2007, reflecting Africa's increasing strategic importance to the United States.¹ Although it was Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, who announced the creation of Africa Command (AFRICOM) to Congress, formal efforts to establish an AFRICOM began in mid 2006, under former US Secretary of defense, Ronald Rumsfeld. In the past, United States military involvement in Africa was divided among three geographic commands: European Command (EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), and Pacific Command (PACOM). All African countries save for Egypt, form AFRICOM's area of responsibility.

Africa Command was launched with initial operating capability as a sub-unified command under EUCOM on October 1, 2007 and reached full operating capability as a stand –alone unified command on October 1, 2008. Its first Commander, Army General William E. “Kip” Ward, former Deputy Commander of EUCOM, was confirmed by the Senate on September 28, 2007. Despite United States assurances to the contrary, there is a continuing outside perception that the launch of AFRICOM was an aggressive move, undertaken without genuine consultation with Africans and primarily aimed at countering Chinese influence on the continent.²

It is apparent that the new command is still under development. As such, some details regarding the command's structure and foot print are still being finalized. At the time of writing this report, AFRICOM's final headquarters location has not been identified, and a move to the continent may not occur for several years, if at all. Furthermore, it is quite evident that the precise wording of AFRICOM's mission has

evolved since the command was first announced. Hence, Department of Defense (DOD) officials have broadly suggested that the Command's mission is to promote US strategic objectives by working with African partners to help strengthen stability and security the region through improved security capability and military professionalism.³

This paper seeks to discuss the objectives of AFRICOM and evaluate its progress or lack of it, in the implementation of the new command's objectives. This paper endeavors to identify problems/issues associated with the establishment and or implementation of the command's mission and suggest recommendations that would enhance cooperation. To establish whether AFRICOM is on track is subjective, hence, the question-whose perspective is it? To address this question the paper will look at DOD's perspective against other stakeholders and interested parties.

Background on the Establishment of AFRICOM

Africa was not included in the United States military command structure until 1952, when several North African countries, including Libya, were added to the responsibilities of EUCOM because of their historic relationship with Europe. The rest of the continent remained outside the responsibility of any command until 1960 as a response to increasing Soviet influence in the region. Under the Reagan administration, U.S. military involvement in Africa was largely dominated by Cold War priorities, and the Administration's "containment" policy led to DOD to divide responsibility for Africa into its configuration among three geographic commands. Following the end of the cold war, United States policy toward Africa was driven by President George H.W. Bush's vision of a "New World Order"⁴ and later by President William J. Clinton's policy of "assertive multilateralism."⁵ This commitment resulted in the deployment of over 25000 United States soldiers in Somalia in 1992. In 1994, President Clinton ordered the

withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia. At the same time a limited number of U.S. troops were deployed to Central Africa to assist in humanitarian efforts for Rwandan refugees and to protect humanitarian supplies in Rwanda. In 1995, DOD outlined its view of Africa, in its U.S. Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, asserting that “ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa.”⁶ This contradicting view may have been necessitated by domestic politics that were against the deployment of U.S. troops abroad. At the same time, the U.S had to respond to international pressure that called for its participation on humanitarian missions in Africa. In essence, this was a reflection of the long held U.S. view that Africa was the periphery.

The 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa and the subsequent U.S. retaliatory strike against Sudan are considered by many analysts to be the turning point in U.S. strategic policy toward the region.⁷ This view is attributable to a number of factors ranging from the fact that Africa was becoming a breeding ground for terrorist threats to seeing Africa as an important partner for both economic and security cooperation. Consequently, the Bush Administration’s National Security Strategy of 2002 reflected a need for a more focused strategic approach toward the African continent: “In Africa, promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States-preserving human dignity, and our strategic priority-combating global terror.”⁸ This suggests that for these challenges to be realized, the U.S. Security Strategy must concentrate on developing the security and intelligence capabilities of indigenous security elements through bilateral engagement and “coalitions of the willing.”⁹ Thus, the establishment of the new Africa Command reflects an evolution in the policymaker’s perception of U.S.

strategic interests in Africa. In 2004 an advisory panel of Africa experts, authorized by congress to propose new policy initiatives, identified five factors that have shaped increased U.S. interests in Africa in the past decade: oil, global trade, armed conflicts, terror, and HIV/AIDS.¹⁰

Current AFRICOM Activities in Africa

The 2008 U.S National Defense Strategy stresses the military's commitment to the concept of a new "jointness," with focus on adopting a "whole of government" approach in a bid to achieving national security objectives. AFRICOM's emphasis on deterring or averting conflict reflects an evolution in DOD's strategy of capacity building in partner states to ensure regional stability.

This is reflected in AFRICOM's objectives as laid out by its commander, General William "Kip" Ward on the 17 March, 2009 to the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC): Defeat the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization and its associated networks; Ensure peace operation capacity exists to respond to emerging crises, and continental peace support operations are effectively fulfilling mission requirements; Cooperate with identified African states in the creation of an environment inhospitable to the unsanctioned possession and proliferation of WMD capabilities and expertise; Improve security sector governance and increased stability through military support to comprehensive, logistic, and enduring United States Government (USG) efforts in designated states; and protect populations from deadly contagions¹¹. These objectives were crafted in the context of DOD's strategic end states: African countries and organizations are able to fend for their own security and contribute to security on the continent; African governments and regional security establishments have the capacity to mitigate threats from organizations committed to violent extremism; and that African

countries and organizations maintain professional militaries that respond to civilian authorities, respect the rule of law, and abide by international human rights norms.

In order to meet its theater strategic objectives, AFRICOM is expected to implement and support programs that span the whole of Africa, as well as focusing on specific regions and countries. To support the fight against violent extremism calls for protracted, innovative approaches and an orchestration of national and international power. To achieve this, the command needs to strengthen its partners' security capacity, deny terrorists freedom of action and access to resources, while simultaneously diminishing the conditions that foster violent extremism.

To demonstrate this commitment, DOD in partnership with other USG agencies, engaged in multiple lines of operation in Africa with the goal of building partner capabilities. In this regard, the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-TRANS SAHARA (OEF/TS) component of the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is designed to assist participating African nations in the control of their territories to deny safe havens to terrorists groups. Nine African countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria and Tunisia) and four European partners (France, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and U.S) participated in Exercise FLINTLOCK in November 2008. The Sahel nations are; Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia. The main objective of the exercise was to improve military interoperability, and strengthen regional relationships.¹² Though focused primarily on training mission, Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) forces are widely reported to have taken part in offensive operations.¹³

COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-HORN OF AFRICA (CJTF-HOA) is the second named operation ongoing in Africa. The CJTF employs an indirect approach to counter terrorism, wherein a strategy of Cooperative Conflict Prevention builds security capacity, promotes regional cooperation, and protects coalition interests.¹⁴ Whether true or not, however, the Task Force is better known for its reputed links to the U.S. special operations forces (SOF) supported the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in late 2006.¹⁵

The third and final operation to date, under the guise of supporting the fight against violent extremism is OPERATION OBJECTIVE VOICE-AFRICA (OOV-A). It is a measure intended to combat extremist ideology. Military Information Support Teams, in conjunction with DOS public diplomacy, have reportedly demonstrated some success in several countries, including Nigeria, Mali, and Kenya. However, measuring these types of success in operations is extremely difficult. This is substantiated by General Ward's response in a recent interview in France. When asked to comment on trends regarding extremist threat in the Sahel area he responded that he wouldn't know the right answer, except that activities continue and they continue in myriad locations, for example; the east coast of Africa.¹⁶

The second category of AFRICOM involvement is under the umbrella of security assistance. The main focus of U.S. and AFRICOM efforts is conflict prevention, which is achieved through security cooperation, civil military initiatives, and humanitarian projects. AFRICOM, it is hoped, will pioneer a new model of U.S. military engagement abroad, while being mindful of the complicated, interconnected relationship between security, governance, and development.¹⁷

Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) programs remain the cornerstone of AFRICOM's persistent, sustained engagement. These are military to military programs geared towards assisting U.S. allies and partners in maturing their capabilities to conduct operations with well trained, disciplined forces that respect human rights and the rule of law. An array of such programs include: International Military Education and Training (IMET), which provide education and training to foreign military and civilian personnel. It is a long-term program that targets future military and civilian leaders. Currently, forty-six of the fifty three African States and one organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are expected to have IMET programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009.¹⁸

Foreign Military Financing (FMF) provides critical U.S. military equipment and services to partner countries. AFRICOM seeks to align FMF programs to enhance security capacity by having them as part of its long-term strategy to procure compatible systems that increase interoperability, effectiveness, and efficiency of training.

Previously, such centralized focus was lacking since Africa was the responsibility of more than one command. The numbers for FY 2008 FMF were approximately \$18.7 million for 53 countries, with most of the effort directed to Tunisia and Morocco;¹⁹

Foreign Military Sale (FMS) have improved interoperability with countries that benefit from the program. Countries that are eligible to receive FMS stand to benefit from the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program as well. For example, the Senegalese military received U.S.\$675 000 under the auspices of African Crisis Response Initiative.²⁰ It must be noted that DoD executes IMET and FMF programs on behalf of DoS and this arrangement adds value to the process since DoD brings in its expertise. Furthermore,

these programs diminish defense budget pressures of African governments and can hopefully help with the redirection of funds to meet social needs.

The third category of AFRICOM activities is the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). This is a U.S. State Department led initiative to enhance global capabilities to conduct peace support operations.²¹ As of FY 2005, ACOTA has trained over 68000 African soldiers, including 3500 military trainers, thereby creating a pool of PKO capability that could be used anywhere in Africa and possibly, elsewhere in the world. Since 2003, over 400 military to military events have helped host nations address such fundamental topics as integration of women in the military (e.g. Botswana), civilian control of the military, establishment of military legal codes and programs to develop professional officer, non commissioned officer (NCO), and chaplain corps.

Lastly, the National Guard State Partnership (SPP) remains an effective TSC program. The program links U.S. states and territories with African countries to help foster long-term relationships, promotes access, enhances African military professionalism and capabilities, interoperability, and promotes healthy civil-military relations. Currently AFRICOM has seven state partnerships: Botswana-North Carolina; Ghana-North Dakota; Morocco; Utah; Nigeria-California; Senegal; Vermont; South Africa-New York; and Tunisia-Wyoming.²²

The fourth program of activities is Humanitarian Assistance (HA). HIV/AIDS is a military force generation and sustainment problem for African forces and is a risk to African security and stability.²³ DOD executes this program in coordination with the office of the Secretary of Defense Health Affairs Defense Health Program and the DOS

Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator using the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); and the DOS, using the HIV/AIDS Military Health Affairs FMF program. DOD activities supporting African Military's fight against HIV/AIDS have been very successful and now reach 497,000 troops in 39 countries.²⁴

AFRICOM coordinates its HA programs with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and DOS to ensure its HA efforts on the continent complement and support USAID's lead on development initiatives within a country. The command's FY 2008 projects included providing veterinary and medical care, building and furnishing schools and clinics, digging wells, providing clean water in rural and austere locations, and help in delivering disaster relief. Linked to the HA activities is the ongoing Pandemic Response Program. Cognizant of the roles African militaries are likely to play in pandemic response continentally, Congress provided FY 2008 funds to enable USAID, AFRICOM, and PACOM to partner with, and develop, host nation militaries' pandemic response capacity. Currently, AFRICOM assessment teams are in East and West Africa to develop national and regional activities that focus on the military role in maintaining security, communications, providing logistic support for the provision of food, medicine, and other commodities, as well as providing augmented medical care to cater for pandemic incidents.²⁵

Finally, interagency cooperation and partnership efforts are of critical importance to the command's success. Today, all senior executive interagency positions at AFRICOM have been filled, and efforts to have additional interagency positions filled are ongoing.²⁶ Representatives from appropriate agencies have participated in Theater Strategy and Theater Campaign Plan (TCP) discussions that were scheduled for

completion by the spring of 2009. AFRICOM is aggressively pursuing new, innovative processes and relationships to improve DOD collaboration with other USG agencies in order to optimize the effectiveness of all U.S. activities in Africa.

These processes include but not limited to General Ward's frequent visits to the DoS and having Senior DoS officials who are there to help ensure AFRICOM programs are aligned and linked with policy. All AFRICOM activities fall within the purview of the aforementioned framework to achieve DoD's stated strategic endstates. General Ward reiterated this to the SASC testimony; assuring them that AFRICOM was effectively serving U.S. foreign policy objectives by advancing collaboration between DoD and other USG agencies to build greater security with African partners."²⁷ The Command's Commander, did however, allude to the challenges AFRICOM faces in the execution of its mission.

Significant Challenges faced by AFRICOM

In his statement to the SASC, General Ward acknowledged, and rightly so, the fact that AFRICOM faces challenges in realizing its objectives. These challenges range from theater infrastructure and posture requirements to overt and covert resistance by some African leaders and other interested parties. It is difficult to establish how strong this resistance affects AFRICOM's activities on the continent. As indicated by General Ward, AFRICOM infrastructure and posture requirements are in two major areas: headquarters establishment, and theater operational support.

There has been considerable debate over where to ultimately base AFRICOM. To date, AFRICOM's final headquarters location has not been identified, and a move to the continent may not occur for several years, if at all. There are two main issues attributable to this status quo; limited infrastructural support and the unintended

consequences of a visible footprint; all of which have direct impact on the mission. This, however, depends on which lens one is using. The posture for theater operational support has exploited the already existing Forward Operating Site (FOS) and Cooperative Security Locations (CSL) in AFRICOM's AOR. The Command's two FOSs are; Ascension Island (United Kingdom) and Camp Lemonier (Djibouti).²⁸ In November 2008, Secretary of Defense announced that the decision on whether to move the command out of Germany would be postponed until 2012 to allow the command to gain a greater understanding of its long term operational requirements.²⁹

The second challenge is interagency participation. According to AFRICOM, strategic success in Africa depends on a whole-of-government approach to stability and security. Integrating personnel from federal civilian agencies is intended to facilitate collaboration among agencies, but AFRICOM has had difficulties in filling its interagency positions, especially middle management ones.³⁰ Furthermore, the armed services (Army, Navy, and Marines) are now in the process of standing up the service component headquarters that will support the new command with most expected to be fully operational by October 2009.³¹ This will further aggravate the interagency personnel shortage as there will be a requirement to have representatives in all the service headquarters for ease of coordination. It became apparent, in a recent Africa symposium held at the United States Army War College in November, 2009, that AFRICOM still faces staffing problems for both the military and civilian agencies owing to engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan.³² This deficiency has a direct bearing on the whole-of-government approach, which is key to realizing AFRICOM's set objectives.

The third challenge has to do with constraining financial provisions. Given that a large part of AFRICOM's mandate is to build the indigenous capacity of African defense forces, the ease with which the command can conduct security cooperation programs is key to its success. This requires money to maintain the troops and for the hiring of contractors. DoD officials suggest that inefficiencies exist in the authorities through which funding is provided for the military's TSC activities. Some military officials have argued that the applicable laws need simplification to allow the combatant commands greater flexibility to respond to emerging threats and opportunities. Others have raised concerns, though, that modifying the administrative authorities could interfere with the Department of State's diplomatic decisions or bilateral relationships.³³ These concerns were reflected in the funding for AFRICOM.

On September 30, 2008, President Bush signed into law H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and continuing Appropriations Act, 2009 (P.L.110-329).³⁴ Under this legislation, which included defense appropriations, AFRICOM received US\$53 million less than what was requested. The command lost some requested funding because of across-the-board cuts to the operations and maintenance account.³⁵ This was a clear reflection of concerns over the "militarization" of Foreign Policy. Whether true or not, however, the Task Force is better known for its reputed links to the U.S. special operations forces (SOF) supported the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in late 2006.³⁶ Although the identified cuts targeted the proposed regional offices, the TSOC, and DOD salaries for interagency personnel, the joint explanatory statement accompanying the final legislation expressed support for AFRICOM.³⁷ The statement also insisted that the State Department and USAID should

“play a more important role in this new organization supported with the appropriate manpower and funding required.”³⁸ DOD’s defense budget request for FY2010 includes funding for four new Offices of Security Cooperation in Cameroon, Chad, Libya, and Rwanda, and expansion of existing offices in Kenya, Liberia, and Morocco.³⁹ Overall, the funding and footprint issues are a clear indication that the command is still going through infrastructural development to reach optimal capacity. Lastly, military resources have been stretched by major theater operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, making troop readiness and costs associated with standing up a new command, a critical issue for congress.⁴⁰ In the author’s opinion, AFRICOM’s footprint is inadequate. To build long lasting relationships, the parties involved need to interact on a daily basis and must be subjected to the same environment. This relationship by correspondence is not only costly, but plant seeds of doubt and mistrust.

A fourth AFRICOM concern stems from stakeholder concerns regarding the command’s mission. Despite DOD’s continued statement, that AFRICOM is intended to support, not lead U.S. diplomatic and development efforts in Africa, State Department officials continue to express concern that the military would become the lead for all U.S. government activities in Africa. This concern is; even though the U.S. Embassy leads decision-making on U.S. government non- combatant activities conducted in a particular country. Furthermore, other state and USAID officials noted that the creation of AFRICOM could blur traditional boundaries among diplomacy, development, and defense, thereby militarizing U.S. foreign policy. Hence, non- governmental organizations are concerned that the militarization of humanitarian assistance would put

their aid workers at greater risk if their activities are associated with U.S. military activities.⁴¹

The fifth concern is the skepticism and suspicion that Africans have towards AFRICOM. Given Africa's experience in the hands of Western governments, from slave trade to colonialism, to the hemispheric Cold War hegemonic struggles for chunks of the African continent, it should be no surprise to the United States and other Western governments, that Africans view them with heightened suspicions.⁴² The African Press, academics, and leaders have expressed fears about AFRICOM. Dulae Mbachu, a Nigerian journalist, voiced his fears to the effect that increased U.S. military presence in Africa may simply serve to protect unpopular regimes that are friendly to its interest, as was the case during the cold war, while Africa slips further into poverty.⁴³ More so, an important American ally was equally dismissive; Nigeria's Foreign Minister, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, emphatically stated that foreign troops were unwelcome in Africa, and he demands to be better informed and more closely consulted in the matter of AFRICOM's establishment.⁴⁴

In a bid to ensure AFRICOM was abreast with local issues, planners hoped to locate the headquarters on the continent, which did not amuse Africans. South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) rejected any idea of locating AFRICOM forces in the region.⁴⁵ This resentment over AFRICOM's location further confirmed the need to understand African sensibilities which demand legitimacy. That legitimacy can only come about through reaching "common ground" between the USG and African countries through the African Union.

Finally, AFRICOM's success is challenged by the increasing influence of China in Africa. China wants to be present and powerful in Africa for both economic and strategic reasons. This may have pressurized the U.S. to take a renewed or late interest in Africa, an interest in which the AFRICOM is a powerful symbol and symptom. Perhaps AFRICOM was not created to compete with China, but the perception in the African eyes exists that competition is brewing. The increasing influence of China provides African countries with an alternative that, at least in the near term, is in many ways much more appealing. This is so because of the "authoritarian development" model and lack of conditionality that many leaders find attractive. Consequently, this alternative will undermine AFRICOM's objectives. China is not constrained from trading with countries or dealing with politicians that the West finds too unsavory or too unstable. For example, the Chinese continue to sell weapons to Sudan and Zimbabwe despite their current status as pariah states on the world stage. Furthermore, China has also angered the US and Great Britain governments in their dealings with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, where the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company went so far as to donate \$13million in blue tiles for the Presidential palace, while most Zimbabweans live in abject poverty.⁴⁶

As an apparent response to the Bush Administration's Millennium Challenge Corporation initiative of 2000, China established the China –Africa Cooperative Forum (CACF) to promote trade and investment with forty- four countries on the continent. The program provides funds for investment in industrial development or transportation projects, many of them benefiting Chinese construction firms and not indigenous companies. Countries that benefited from this program included Algeria, Egypt, Gabon,

Angola, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Libya, Niger, and Sudan.⁴⁷

The Chinese have also aggressively looked at forging or covering foreign debt as a means of gaining access. Prior to the Sino-Africa conference in 2003, where China offered debt relief of thirty-one countries in Africa, Beijing had cancelled a \$10billion debt owed by some countries on the continent.⁴⁸ Additionally, China offered 167 items of aid to forty-six African countries from 2004 to 2005, which contributed to the building of the infrastructure projects, including roads, schools, water supply, and hospitals.⁴⁹

Other notable large scale development projects funded by China include \$200 million to Sierra Leone to rebuild its tourism trade and \$170 million in investment in Zambia's copper and manganese mining industries. Even further, some public funding is provided with "strings attached," such as a \$2 billion deal signed with Angola in 2005 for oil exploration rights. The deal provides for purchases of oil futures at above market rates with the provision that Chinese companies be awarded contracts for other public sector projects within Angola.⁵⁰ Increasingly, Chinese companies are aggressively purchasing African energy companies or the rights to develop oil reserves in African countries as a means of securing future sources of oil.⁵¹ To date, "China has either struck oil deals or built on existing ones in Angola, Algeria, Chad, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria. More than half of Sudan's oil exports go to China, accounting for roughly 5% of its imports."⁵²

Analysis

AFRICOM, as a learning organization, embraces changes and these changes encompass the mission, forms of engagement with African organizations and leaders, strategic communications and internal processes.⁵³ Notwithstanding successes and

gains in terms of security capacity building as seen by DoD, the problem with an AFRICOM based on the OEF-TS and CJTF-HOA models is that African security is simply not tied to policies framed by GWOT. African leaders do not view transnational Islamist terrorism as a threat to Africa's security in light of human security. The above operations have been cited as model programs on which AFRICOM should build as evidenced in the latest brief to the Senate Armed Services Committee by General Ward.⁵⁴ In reality, these successes are localized and temporary in nature. The human security view of Africans focuses instead on hunger, disease, internecine warfare, oppressive regimes and crushing poverty.⁵⁵

Furthermore, it is not enough to build capability, the main issue is: will the capability be used for its intended purposes when required? What guarantee does the U.S. have on returns for its security investments? These activities are, however, linked to elements of "hard" U.S. power. Although the use of this power may be justifiable, it is nevertheless incompatible with the aims stated by U.S. officials; namely, help Africans help themselves in a manner they so request. If extended to AFRICOM, this contradiction will be more pronounced and subsequently jeopardize support from the African audience necessary for cementing ownership of AFRICOM's aims. Take for example, the Malian case of conflict between nomads (Taureg) and central authority. The precarious balance between central authority and the hinterlands is threatened by U.S. military involvement against Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).⁵⁶

The United States needs to appreciate why Africans voice such concerns. The success of AFRICOM depends on its legitimacy in the eyes of Africans. This requires interacting differently with African leaders and institutions than has been customary.

This paper acknowledges that there may be inaccuracies in the depiction of certain events and opinions concerning the negative response by Africans, since the methodology used to capture views reflected herein, focused on perceptions and messages as opposed to determining the “truth”. It is without doubt that security remains a high concern in Africa and would have had unquestionable acceptance, more so, credible because of the backing of the most powerful military in the world. However, AFRICOM may have rendered itself irrelevant in the eyes of African leaders by initially putting forward an implausible democratization and humanitarian agenda since it had no reflection of “hard” U.S. interests. Subsequently, the agenda brewed suspicion, disbelief, and concerns about the militarization of American diplomacy.

It is inconceivable for any African leader to welcome a military organization to teach him democracy and good governance because it’s the responsibility of civilian agencies. South Africa, Nigeria, and Libya have voiced the most radical opposition against AFRICOM. This is due to the fact that these regional hegemonies feared that AFRICOM would shape the security orientation in their “zones of influence,” resulting in a loss of power. A better strategy would have been to engage with regional structures thereby implicitly involving them (hegemonies) directly.

Some analysts have argued that poor public relations significantly contributed to the early resistance to AFRICOM. Brett Schaeffer of Heritage Foundation claims that the U.S was hesitant in announcing details about AFRICOM.⁵⁷ This may well have presented an opportunity for China to exploit in order to counter AFRICOM. It is perhaps realistic to say that, no amount of public relations is going to dissuade regional hegemonies from the notion that renewed U.S. interest in Africa will result in action that

may run counter to their interests. Similarly, no amount denial will convince Africans that AFRICOM is not about countering the Chinese, and other competitors (India and Russia).

Africans see the rhetoric of democratic idealism as a modern day version of the “white man’s burden,” or civilizing mission.⁵⁸ Some liken the G8 meeting in 2006 that kicked off this recent interest in Africa to the Berlin Conference in the 19th century that carved up the continent.⁵⁹ No African attended that conference either.

The headquarters location issue affects AFRICOM. Locating the headquarters within the AOR would have several benefits in terms of proximity. For example, having the AFRICOM staff in close geographic proximity to their African counterparts and to U.S. diplomatic missions on the continent could enable more efficient interaction. The distant location of the headquarters is compounded by the fact that some of AFRICOM’s component and subordinate commands’ staff posts have not been filled. This deficiency has undoubtedly, had an effect on the progress and efficiency of AFRICOM operations. The Government Accountability Office has noted in testimony to Congress that “uncertainties related to AFRICOM’s presence hinder DOD’s ability to estimate future funding requirements for AFRICOM and raises questions about whether DOD’s concept of developing enduring relationships on the continent can be achieved.”⁶⁰

Additionally, the reduction in funding to some of AFRICOM’s programs, (TSOC and interagency personnel) and salaries has had an impact on the command’s activities. This has led to a situation where the military activities outpace those of DOS such as promoting good governance. Furthermore, this has created room for perhaps misguided assumptions that the military activities are at the forefront of AFRICOM’s

agenda as opposed to being in support of DOS. One analyst commented “they are significantly walking back from the interagency. What they are saying now is that they will more efficiently and effectively deliver military programs.”⁶¹ This may work against any strategic communications efforts geared towards Secretary of States’ primacy in setting the agenda for U.S. relations with the foreign countries. Furthermore, the concern by U.S. DOS and other stakeholders that AFRICOM would militarize U.S. foreign aid and lead to greater U.S. military involvement has direct bearing on the envisaged progress. Some dissenting voices have asserted that this concern may have greatly influenced the reduction in funding.

AFRICOM’s policy of enhancing partner countries and regional organizations’ capacity to deal with security issues they face will have more sustainability and promote further economic development. It is indisputable that economic development and institutional building can only thrive in a peaceful environment. China will soon realize as their investments in Africa grow, that it is in their interest to have a stable and peaceful environment in the continent and subsequently becoming a U.S. partner in achieving the same. Finally, direct confrontation between the United States and China in the competition over Africa is possible, not necessarily inevitable. Both nations have more to lose over a military confrontation in or over Africa.

Conclusion

The ultimate role of AFRICOM in promoting and exercising the interagency model in the context of whole-of-government approach to stability and security in Africa is yet to be realized. It is too early to tell how things are going. AFRICOM undoubtedly offers a better and more integrated framework for pursuing U.S. interests in Africa and could be taken as a credible symbol of U.S. commitment.

It is important to note that the original key precepts of the command; that it would have significant interagency participation and would be physically located in Africa to engage partners there, will not be realized in the near term. Undoubtedly, security cooperation programs have had an impact, though they may be short lived if they are not backed by long term commitment on the security and stability in Africa. The nature and degree of success depends on whose perspective it is. However, the beneficiary's perspective bears more weight as it would foster sustained programs.

Long term security and stability in Africa is dependent on a number of factors, but most importantly the commitment of interagency partners in the U.S. and those in Africa. The latter's involvement is influenced by a fairer and just U.S. policy in Africa. Most significantly, recent U.S. government actions, focusing on GWOT, in North and East Africa illustrate a policy emphasis contradictory to AFRICOM's stated design. More broadly, it highlights a U.S. security establishment still grappling with the application of force in the post-9/11 environment.

Since AFRICOM represents the first interagency command, effort must be made to achieve a harmonious, synergistic balance between military and diplomacy elements. In order for AFRICOM to correct its early blunders, the command's entry strategy and strategic communication plan should address primarily among others: the revisited U.S. strategy toward Africa in more comprehensive terms to provide coherence, consistency, and long term focus; establish a formal collaboration framework involving AFRICOM, the African Union (AU), and the regional economic communities, including joint planning and coordinating structures.

To capitalize on the progress already made, the U.S. should continue to engage African countries through all elements of power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic while concurrently engaging China in areas where the two countries have common interests, for example, energy markets and counter terrorism and counter proliferation of WMD.

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